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SUBJECT: ICELAND: 2009 COUNTY REPORTS ON TERRORISM

11. (SBU) Included is Embassy Reykjavik's submission for the 2009 Country Report on Terrorism. Embassy POC for this report is Political Officer Joshua Rubin, office phone: 354 562-9100; email: rubinjn@state.gov.

The Government of Iceland stated in its most recent terrorist threat assessment, conducted by the National Police Commissioner in 2008, that the likelihood of terrorist activities occurring in Iceland is low. In the same assessment, however, the government concluded that the potential consequences of such activities were severe enough to merit a high level of vigilance. The government, therefore, continued its efforts to strengthen domestic border security and counterterrorism capabilities during the year.

The National Police Commissioner has primary responsibility for counterterrorism efforts in the country. An elite counterterrorism unit, called the Viking Squad, is considered the first line of defense in Iceland's efforts against terrorism. The unit is comprised of approximately 45 members and specializes in various types of paramilitary techniques. The National Security Unit, which also falls under the jurisdiction of the National Police Commissioner, gathers intelligence, drafts threat assessments and exchanges information with foreign counterparts with the aim to prevent or reduce the likelihood of terrorism.

The Icelandic Coast Guard (ICG) is responsible for Iceland's coastal defense and monitors the ocean around Iceland, both within and outside of territorial waters. The ICG served as the Chair of the North Atlantic Coast Guard Forum in 2009 and hosted the organization's annual conference in September. Also in September, the ICG hosted Northern Challenge 2009, a NATO-supported exercise focusing on explosive ordnance disposal and counterterrorism scenarios. The ICG cooperates closely with its counterparts in the U.S. Coast Guard and signed a cooperative agreement in 2008 that increased bilateral security cooperation.

The Icelandic Defense Agency (IDA) has responsibility for operational ties with NATO and other allied states. The IDA, which currently falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, is also responsible for monitoring Icelandic airspace via the Icelandic Air Defense System (IADS). In May, the IDA coordinated the third annual round of high level security dialogue talks between the United States and Iceland since the closure of the Naval Air Station in Keflavik (NASKEF) in 2006. The government announced in December that the IDA would be dissolved in 2010 and that its functions, along with those of several other agencies, will be merged into a prospective Ministry of Interior Affairs.

The Icelandic government supported multilateral counterterrorism efforts. Iceland continued its deployment of personnel at Kabul International Airport and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Headquarters in Afghanistan in support of NATO operations.

As a country participating in the Visa Waiver Program (VWP), Iceland continued to comply with requirements in the VWP law related to information sharing and other law enforcement and counterterrorism

cooperation. This cooperation was further enhanced by the  
Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007.  
WATSON